

Sept. 8, 1944
Brazilian Indep Day

Dear Laura,

Your Paris letter arrived this minute. I was in the midst of my "daily guidance notes" for United Nations Radio. I stopped what I was doing, tore open the letter and began. She writes of Paris I almost sobbed - threw the letter away and resumed my notes (I had only ten more minutes before meeting time - which I conduct every day). Now meeting is over and I can relax a moment or so. I pick up your letter and read.

She writes of Paris - to me! to me, she writes of Paris. How can you do that Laura? You say "I suddenly saw myself in Paris". So you see yourself in Paris? And what about me? Dont you think I've seen myself in Paris at least a million times since the city has been liberated? Dont you? So I worked very hard, and put my back to the wheel and my finger to the stone and my hand to the pie (la main a la pate), planning and dreaming of crossing the bluey Mediterranean, setting foot again on French soil, speaking to real Frenchmen once again, Frenchmen who had suffered occupation and did not sneer at liberty and freedom, shake their hands, drink with them and chatter & chat about France the war and Les grandes et libres Ameriques. I saw myself too, traversing France and arriving at long long last in Paris. Return to Paris - free, un-German-; un-Boched, un-Nazified, un-Swastikad, free, and happy and gay and ready to begin life anew with vigor and determination. I saw all that, I saw myself walking again along the Boulevard ~~Mixx~~ St. Michel - the Boul' Mich' - trying to see the damage done because of the stret fighting there, strolling into the Jardin des Luxembourg and the Palais and cursing the Huns for their destruction. Then I saw myself taking the Metro (even tho I know its still not running now) over the Cité Universitaire to look over the buildings and the parkgrounds there; and all the while I was breathing in big drafts of the wonderful Paris air, rushing over to friends' homes to see if they were still there, dashing to the Sorbonne and stopping short as the stately learnedness of its grey,-blk walls and facades told me that the place was still in one piece.

So I dreamed on and planned. I knew the fours I was going to make all over again: I had my whole itinerary planned out, the slow walks along the quays to the bookstalls, to the Halles, to Notre Dames, then across the Cite to the right bank and along the Grands Boulevards till I got to the Madeleine, then out toward the Place de La Concorde, passed the American Embassy and onto the Champs Elysees toward the Arc. Oh well..... those were the plans. Now I'm getting ready to go to..... Italy.

So you talk to me of Paris. You want me to tell you about Paris? How can I talk now of Paris. I am told I am needed elsewhere, the war is still on, I am too valuable, and meanwhile all the others slip off to France (not all of course but many). It was of course a terrible shock to me to learn that I wasnt going into France, ~~xxxx~~ with our team. The war it seems is going to quickly for us - which is good - but it has of course changed all plans. Mine now have blown up like a ozone-filled bubble.

And only last week, one of the Brazilian diplomatic officials here, invited me to dinner with him and his wife. He was celebrating his coming departure for - Paris. We toasted - to our reunion in the capital. After all thought I I ought to be there soon. Oh yeah! But enuf of Paris - As my father wrote me in a recent letter "Vive la Paris!" and that's all.

But no, your letter has asked me to answer a question. Let's see now what is it that troubles you, Miss? You ask me, Laura, to peek into my crystal ball, and oracle out an explanation of why Paris is great, why Paris is different, why Paris is Paris. Hahaha, why do people like Paris? Why do eyes light up when the name is mentioned? Why do men who have never visited

Paris suddenly sit up when somebody says the word, or why does some young maid's heart suddenly race quicker when a friend remarks "I've just come back from Paris". He's been to Paris, they whisper; adolescents lift their eyebrows in a knowing smile that spells femme and amour and castling impish glances at one another. But why is Paris is Paris?

Paris has ears, as you indeed say, but Paris has more than ears ~~eyes~~ eyes, a heart, freedom, feeling, emotion and harmony. To the Germans Paris undoubtedly was still a very beautiful city - the Louvre was there, the Arc de Triomphe and the Champs Elysees were there and all the buildings which filled the city were there during the four years of occupation. And yet every German could probably tell you that Paris then, was NOT Paris. It wasn't because it was a vacuum. Paris un-free, shackled and persecuted withdrew its life into itself - and the laughter, the openness - the joie-de-vivre disappeared. Paris is Paris because it knows how to ~~make~~ take a total stranger and welcome him to its very heart at once, make him a part of it, blend and mellow him in its beauty and freedom. But when - as with the Nazis - it is not freedom that exists but slavery and oppression, then Paris curls up like a turtle into its shell and the Paris just isn't any more.

Frankly, Laura, I think everybody likes Paris for different reasons, and many people like Paris just because everybody else likes Paris. It is like the judgments of towns in North Africa and Italy which are bandied about so freely. A city gets a certain "reputation". Bari is gloomy and grim, Naples is dirty and sad and the people are grouchy, Oren is this, Algiers is that and so it goes. And so you get a green chap just off a boat from the States or just in from London and there you find him spouting the same ineptitudes and platitudes about a city which he scarcely knows and opinions which he probably doesn't really feel himself - but must repeat just because he doesn't want to be pointed to as "different". The same is true of Paris - the reputation has caught on and everybody likes Paris and loves it before every having known anything about it. Except that here - of course - I think the deification and reverence is well justified. For me personally Paris is the city of cities because of that wonderful combination of freedom and beauty. Where no one bothered you no matter what you do or did or how crazy or silly it might seem, where the bubbling mind could find free expression and free ideas. That is where the café comes in. In the café you are free to sit over one little cup of coffee on a terrasse all day long, play cards or chess, smoke, discuss politics, literature and world revolution of the infinite molecules and electrons and you were left alone. When I think of the wonderfulness of Paris I think of the wonder of French literature. But when I think of Paris itself - le vrai Paris, I neither think of Balzac and his sordid hair-pin descriptions of the city, nor of Moliere nor of Voltaire or any of the others. I immediately get a flash-picture of Guy de Maupassant, picture a charming little couple - young - going out of one of the portes for a Sunday afternoon's fishing along the Seine, and then I think of my dear old Georges Courteline and his hectic, goofy café characters. In a way I suppose that is why I wanted to write my doctorate thesis on Courteline and why his juicy language always thrilled me - it was the rich product of the Panam crowd - of Paris. To me Paris is the beautiful Notre Dame Cathedral and the luxurious Louvre and the Champs-Elysees, but perhaps even more it's a little bistro in the Latin quarter which I knew so well, it's a workers' restaurant in the 14th arrondissement at the edge of town where we used to go every evening practically to get our cote de veau and our ~~cream~~ creme de marron and creme fraiche. It's the Parc Montsouris even more than the beautiful Parc Monceau, it's the rue Monsieur le Prince and its old-fashioned houses with the hole-in-the-floor-toilets. It's that unbelievably delicious feeling of standing at a zinc early in the morning and dunking a croissant or a brioche

into a hot cup of coffee, glancing thru a morning paper or chatting nervously with friends - all standing at this counter. Paris to me personally is all that and I suppose a million other little things - just as it is for millions of other little people. Paris though is NOT the Folie Bergere, it is not the bordelos (although hell they have a place too), it is not very strangely enough the grands magasins and all their wonderful pre-war Parisian styled products, it's not the Eiffel Tower (although when I saw the Swastika floating on top of it, it did become something terrible and made Paris just that - the Tower). It is the Musee de l'homme, it is the Metro and it is the Paris bus with its unmatched rear platform that bounces and sways as the driver honks and toots madly as he races along the street, unmindful of car or pedestrian, a veritable race against death. But you inevitably come out alive and alright - and you've seen Paris pass by around you in all its varied ~~xx~~ forms and shapes. Those autobuses really give you a good picture of the city whether you take the north-south one from Porte d'Orleans to the Porte de ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ la Chapelle on the number 14. No, its number 4. It takes you all the way up from the Boulevard Jourdan, near the Parc Montsouris and the Cité ~~xx~~ past the Observatoire and Denfert Rochereau, up the Avenue d'Orleans and twists sharply up the Boulevard Raspail into Montparnasse and the St. Germain des Pres section and then in front of the Odeon Theatre. From there it winds up to the Boulevard St. Michel and hops over to the Ile de la Cite, then over to the right bank to rue Rivoli and the sleek shops and from the glitter and shine to the Halles - the Washington and Wallabout market of Paris, plunked down right in the center of town. Swinging out of the lettuce and tomatoes it climbs up toward the Gare de l'Est and then makes a sharp swing past the Gare du Nord without stopping to penetrate Montmartre. There is not very much more to go after that to La Chapelle and the Flea Market at their terminus. There's the peep of the door-closer and the low rough rumble of the automatic doors slowly grinding to a close to keep the onrushing passengers from mobbing onto the platform as the train comes rushing in.

You know what I have just recalled. I remember before leaving for Paris in 1938. I remember the long hours I used to spend pouring over a map of Paris, learning every street, learning every name printed on the map, every building. Oh those wonderful minutes as I tried to puzzle out where rue Soufflot was and my first failing efforts to locate the Sorbonne on the map. That was before I knew I was going to Paris. Can you imagine what it was after? I had those little pocket handbook-maps that cut Paris up into several colored sections, and also give you a huge street map with subway markings and famous buildings and places marked off. How I loved to lose myself along those streets in my room in New York! And I would dream, "would I ever really get there or was the war going to come along and knock my lung-bursting hopes to bits?" Now let's see where were the quays? And I handled some pictures I preciousely kept showing a long-nosed bearded fellow bending all the way over peering interestingly into a huge ~~xx~~ pile of books, another showing another bespectacled chap (goldrimmed) with van-dyke and derby holding a tome in his hand and very calmly, but dead-to-the-world expression on his face examining some book collectors' treasure, I thought. I used to heave loud sighs of anxiety as the New York Times and the Post screamed that it was coming - and my friends (?) scoffed and shrugged their shoulders and said; "Do you really think they're gonna let you go to Europe now?" And they would shrug their shoulders sorrowfully and pity me. The other poor guy who was supposed to have left with me, must have been very much influenced by those vultures and jeslosites, because he got cold feet and decided to call the whole thing off. So away I sailed to France and Paris.

As I recall that it seems so far off and so distant and yet it is

not really, in time only in experience. But the fact is that today I am not in Paris - and the chances of my getting there are slim, very slim - well nigh impossible. To think that Paris has been liberated and that I am not there to see it in its first enthusiasms, its first real thrilling excitements, frenzied joy.

Just the other day a friend of mine Mike Bessie returned from a quick trip to southern France. He told me of the boundless joy and zeal of the population. It is nothing at all like North Africa he said. All those Americans who had come to judge the French from the North Africans have quickly changed their minds when they came to France - where they met the real French. Four years of occupation by the Himmler and Hitler gang is a terrible thing in itself, but for a nation like France which has lived and prospered in its liberty - it must have been unbearable. How much more wonderful must our entry into the capital have seemed then - after so many long months of suffering and torture and deprivation. If the Southern French who new occupation for only a relatively short time greeted us so wildly - how much more frenzied must it have been in Paris - that more than any city in the world needs to be free to be Paris.

And so while the world still beams with happiness at the liberation of Paris, and the lucky war-correspondents and our Allied information units go gaily to work in the city, sending back fascinating story after story, accounts of the FFI battles, of re-awakening Paris, of untouched memories - and all the little dear lovable details that the world wants to know about Paris, --- and so while all this happens, I slink back to my room, pick up my copy of Count Sforza's "Les Italiens tel qu'ils sont" and prepare myself for another phase.... I must take my Paris stories from others, greedily hunt all over for details and more details which never seem to come in with enough speed or quantity. I hear the voices of friends of mine speaking from Paris - Capitain Auberjinois de l'armee americaine - he says - qui vous parle de Paris. And the words ring in my ears and I turn to your damn maps on my wall - let my eye fall on that little round spot with the river winding through it, and realize that I am in the wrong part of the world after all. But que voulez vous c'est la guerre.

This horribly gloomy letter cannot continue. So what better than to tell you of some news items which pass around these days from news-room to office. Every once in a while these phony news reports are circulated around with all the stamp of officialness - and we all get a good laugh. It does no harm - and I let it go on - and laugh too. Today for example at my daily radio meeting, one of the boys brought up the question. Had I seen the item on the labor conditions in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan? It happened that I had seen almost nothing of the news this morning since I was all tied up writing up the procedure we would follow tomorrow when United Nations Radio goes off the air. "What are you jabbering about?" I exclaimed? So they handed me an item - typed up just as it comes off from our monitoring reports. From the BBC 1500 show today they said. It seems (I found out later) that a couple of the boys from the English Radio desk asked the fellow who happened to be temporarily on the Central News Desk (he wasn't a real newsman) about a BBC item on the Sudan. They were kidding him. He hunted thru his summary of that BBC show and found nothing. So he told the English desk boys so. They of course insisted they wanted the item badly, so off went our newsman to the monitoring room insisting that this particular piece be furnished him. Completely bewildered, since no piece existed one of the fellows came to the English desk and asked what was cooking. He was let into the leg-pulling prank and asked if he would put out any old cock-and-bull-story, just to play a little game on this fellow. When he heard what it was all about he said OK. A few minutes later our poor news-substitute came into the radio room, handed the English

To: Laura Sept 2 PAGE FIVE

BBC item and said " I dont think the item is very good. The boys read it & protested that if the BBC could put it out we ought to put it out too. Where upon our news friend blurted out - "Aw everything the BBC puts out isnt that good. Ok I'm not saying you can't use the story on the radio if you want to but I still think it isn't too good." Now here is the payoff. This is the full text of the item, exactly as it came across, supposedly from the monitor:

BBC in english to Europe 1500 9/9

Labor conditions in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan

It has just been reported by Reuters Special correspondent in Capetown, that water buffalos are now being conscripted for forced labor in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. This is expected to relieve the native negro population of the great problem of hauling timber by hand over thousands of miles of jungle swamps. The timber was being shipped to the united states for use in the new housing project.

Of course the story ran through the shop like wildfire and every body was roaring with laughter, except the poor guy who got the brunt of it all. Well I suppose he deserves it. And while on the subject of pranks and practical jokes it reminds of the one that one of the boys put out the other day when all the neutral nations were putting out stories about not letting Nazi war criminals get refuge in their countries. Here it is, in text:

BN-46 9/6 TEXANS WILL NOT SHELTER WAR CRIMINALS ---JW

NEW YORK, September 6 ----Governor Coke Stephenson of Texas Wednesday announced that the Republic of Texas will not give refuge to Nazi war criminals.

Stephenson said: "Them varments aint gonna find no safe place in the Lone Star State. We'll feed 'em to the coyotes."

(Source OWI)

That, Laura, is just to show you that though we may work our heads off pretty much, we do manage to take a moment off now and then to relax and have a good laugh. Naturally most of fellows and girls work pretty long hours and all kinds of crazy hours, night and day and it is just these little kinds of jokes which usually circulate in all radio offices that sort of take the tension off you, especially when the news is running high and hot. As soon as a very slight lull makes an appearance, some lark manages to

get a brilliant idea and out comes a little masterpiece. Since I've gotten started on this subject I might as well tell you about one of the better pieces which was put out not very long ago. It was something of a mimic of the kind of guidance I usually put out to the Radio editors but this one of course was appropriately marked top secret. It's a little long but I think it is well worth the space;

TO: ALL RADIO DESKS
Subject: SPECIAL GUIDANCE

1. The following procedure will immediately be worked out by all radio desks, when SHAEF announces that Allied troops have entered Germany:
 - a. Check with Basic News, to see that their source is NOT France-Affrique.
 - b. If the report comes from a reliable authority, such as the Ankara correspondent in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan -- then pick up on step "c".
 - c. Break in on any show - just select one at random. Mention that Allied troops have entered Germany --- and keep this alive for a few minutes. If the entering troops happen to be Americans, this would be a good time to recall the landing of U.S. Marines in Nicaragua (Basic News Background upcoming).
 - d. After this brief background, the following appropriate selections will be played -- in four languages:
 1. DEUTSCHLAND, DEUTSCHLAND UEBER ALLES
 2. HORST-WESSEL LIEDIf the above two records are out on loan -- from our library, you will play the Spike Jones recording of THE FUHERER'S FACE.
 - e. In anticipation of the excellent coverage you will all give to this vital phase of the war, we wish to convey the Supreme Commander's thanks. His attitude as expressed at several Hq policy meetings, is: "give me psychological warfare anytime---

Then the piece goes on just a little bit longer with some more, but even though the whole thing is a joke I think I'd better not include it. The main part is there though and I do think it is priceless humbug.

Well since I've filled pages with this horrible stuff I might as well top it all with a little gem I myself thought up one sleepymorning. Of course it was not within my dignity, but the fellow to whom it was addressed is a terribly good friend and we have been kidding the life out of each other for some time. He is one of the English editors on our United Nations Radio (that's the UNR in the text) staff and a Londoner. Hold your hark deary for here it comes !

Appelby, you dog and verminite
You heel, you churl, you Satellite
Gibbering, jabbering baboon, disconsolate idi-ite
English scripts you think you write
But let me tell you, you little ~~migxx~~ mite
Nary a line, nary a word, beaten out by day or night
But has boomeranged in foul, reeking stinko-ite.
Blight
Trite
Repulsive sight.
Vile, wretched, retch-ful tripey wight

Give it up, renounce forthright!
Slink back you Limey blight
To those London sewers where you and your tripe
Belong, you turgid, flatulent guttersnipe.
By the Holy Koran, by the beard of the Prophet,
I'm right
'Tis mental paresis, blubbering goo
Oozing nonsense you concoct at night
Prevaricating Pithecanthropite.
Away with thee, sore-infested plagiarite
Flabby-cheeked soporiferite,
Sordid, begrimed, scribacious -- knight?
Begone! Free UNR, at once, this we urge to be polite.
But if you tarry, or hesitate, 'twill be by claw, by
scratch, by tooth, by bite
We'll chase you from the ~~fight~~ fifth floor flight
Till your vaporous form is seen to disappear into the Casbah,
a streaking shriek by night.

That my love is the masterpiece in all its innocence. Pretty horrible stuff now that I read it again - but it is relaxing anyway - that's all I can say for it now.

P.S. It's gettin damn late and I'll be a monkey's uncle if I'm gonna sit here and keep typing out this junk to you. Hell let's close this letter with the hope you can soon be a-writing this way. I'm looking forward to herein from you again soon,,mighty soon.

So long Laura. Take this whole letter with a big grain of salt.

P.S.-2 Hell I just noticed that I havent answered some parts of your letter. Duty calls me. In "This is My Best" I got a kick out of The Thirteen Bus by Vincent Shecan, and the Outbreak of International Gangsterism was good too. Waldo Frank always interests me. The title "The American Jungle" is new to me, never heard of it. Is it good. If it is and you can ship it to me do so - unless it's too big a book. Wait tho till I send you my new address. But no, you can send it to APO-512 BWB -AFHQ. That way it'll get to me quickly. Your rain description. I always remember your love for the rain. Queer, I must say. Those Amehricans! Finally, as to my amorous accomplishments - past and present - ; "Tings aint so bad sister". Confidentially I've cooled quite condiserably, but quite, on that Brazilian project.

Bye, darling, won't see you so soon -

Sandy